

Child Safety Intervention Discussion Guide

Use this guide for supervisory consultation at key decision points. Supervisory consultation is required when the Child Safety Specialist assesses that there is or might be present danger or impending danger.

Is this a present danger situation? If yes, an immediate present danger plan is required before you leave the child.

A child is in present danger when there is an immediate, significant, and clearly observable family condition, child condition, or individual behavior that obviously endangers a child right now or threatens to endanger a child at any moment, and requires immediate action to protect the child before the comprehensive Child Safety and Risk Assessment (CSRA) can be completed.

- Is the dangerous situation happening now or did it just happen?
- Where are you and the child at this time? Are you safe?
- Does the child need immediate medical attention?
- Does the child need immediate protection because an alleged present danger threat cannot be immediately ruled out?
- Examples of this may include child having serious unexplained injuries or a current allegation of sexual abuse by an alleged perpetrator who has access to the child.

Are we discussing a child you think is unsafe?

- **Safe:** *There is no threat of danger to a vulnerable child, or the parent, guardian or custodian has sufficient protective capacity to control or manage any existing threats.*
- **Unsafe:** *There is a threat of danger to a vulnerable child, and no parent, guardian or custodian has sufficient capacity to manage or control the threat(s).*

Why is DCS involved with this family?

- What worries us about this family?
- Is Law Enforcement involved? (Law Enforcement involvement does not mean a child is unsafe.)
- Is this a joint investigation? If so, include OCWI and others as appropriate.
- Have you completed your impending danger assessment and/or spoken to everyone required?
- What is the household make-up and what is each adult’s relationship with the children and involvement in the situation?
- Who is the alleged perpetrator? What are the ages of the children?

Impending Danger Assessment

Impending danger exists when there is an observable family condition or specific behavior, emotion, attitude, perception or situation that may not be occurring in the present, but is likely to occur within the foreseeable future, and there is a degree of certainty or inevitability that it will result in serious or severe harm to a child without intervention.

Reminder: The following 5 SAFETY THRESHOLD CRITERIA must ALL be met for at least one identified safety threat in order to determine a child is unsafe.

1. Are there **Observable Family Conditions** that endanger the child?

A family condition that endangers a child and is real, can be described and reported, and is evidenced in explicit and unambiguous ways. This does not include suspicion or gut feelings.

- What are your observations of the child and parent(s)? Is there physical evidence of violence, physical abuse, neglect?
- What behavior is the parent/child demonstrating that indicates the presence of a safety threat?
- What information is being provided by the children, parents, source, service providers and/or others that indicates the presence or absence of a safety threat? Did the child or parent make a disclosure?
- What is the physical condition of the home? Is there evidence of violence, drug use, or health or safety hazards?
- Is there a specific behavior, emotion, attitude, perception, or situation by the parent, guardian, or custodian that makes the child unsafe? Provide a specific description.
- Does the parent’s substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health, physical or other limitations render them unable to meet the needs, nurture or protect their child? How so? Provide a specific description.

2. Are there **Vulnerable Children**?

A vulnerable child is dependent on others for sustenance and protection, and/or is exposed to circumstances that she or he is powerless to manage. Vulnerability is judged according to age, physical and emotional development, and ability to communicate needs and seek protection.

- What are the ages of all the children living in or have to access to the home?
- Does the child have any medical, physical, cognitive or behavioral health impairments?
- Is the child dependent on others for care and protection?
- Does the child attend school, day care, or community activities where they are regularly seen?
- Who does the child go to for help or seek protection?
- Has the child demonstrated the ability to protect himself/herself or seek protection? Does the child have the capability to do so now?
- What is the child’s emotional capacity? Is the child presenting appropriate maturity level?
- Does the child believe the behavior is normal? Is the child protecting the offending caregiver?
- Does the child recognize when a safety threat is present?
- Is the child fearful of the caretaker?
- Is the child defenseless, exposed to behavior, conditions or circumstances the child is powerless to manage?

3. Is the situation **Out of Control**?

The family conditions pose a danger to the child and are unmanaged, without limits or monitoring, and not subject to influence, manipulation or internal power within the family’s control (that is, no one in the family can control the situation).

- Has the parent demonstrated protective capacity but unable to ensure safety?
 - i.e. – Court Order/Order of Protection? Was it effective or violated? Were they emotionally vested but powerless?
- Is there an adult in the home who is willing and able to protect the child? How do they demonstrate that?
- Can any adults in the home recognize and understand the safety threats? Are they able to control the situation and have power to manage the safety threats?
- Do they recognize the need for intervention and behavioral changes, and have they already taken steps?
- Does the parent/ adult in the home blame the child for the abuse or neglect?
- Can the home or family condition be immediately adjusted to control the safety threat? Why or Why not?
- Will the safety threat continue without intervention?
- How was this situation controlled in the past? What has changed, if anything?
- Have the parents demonstrated an unwillingness or inability to change their behavior (repeated arrests, incarceration, multiple SENs, failure of prior intervention, relinquishment, previous terminations of parental rights, etc.)? How does their behavior impact their ability to parent?
- Have there been previous services/interventions, previous dependencies and/or previous severance with this family? Were behavioral changes demonstrated?

4. Is the effect to the child likely to be **Severe**?

Severity is the harshness of the effects of maltreatment that would include harm that has just occurred, is occurring now, or could potentially occur in the near future. Severe harm is something that results in serious pain, serious injury, suffering, terror, extreme fear, impairment or death.

- Has the child been seriously harmed? Describe the harm. If not, what is the indication that severe harm will occur?
- Has or is the behavior likely to escalate?
- Is there a documented history/pattern of this safety threat that impacts the severity?
- How does, or will, the safety threat impair the child’s functioning?
- Is the likelihood of severe harm the same for all of the children?

5. Is there an imminent **Time Frame** for harm to the child?

Imminence refers to the belief that family behaviors, conditions, or situations will remain active or become active in the immediate or near future.

- Without outside intervention, is there imminence of danger? Is the situation likely to continue and/or escalate?
- What objective evidence is there to support this belief?
- When does the dangerous situation occur? Is there a specific day or time of day that this situation occurs?

Do you have other concerns about the children and family? Is there anything else we need to discuss?

Safety Threats

Identify which safety factor(s) meet all 5 safety threshold criteria as to each parent, guardian or custodian, as to each child. Discuss all areas of concern, to determine if the concern meets the threshold of a safety threat or not.

1. Parent, guardian or custodian leaves child alone and child is not competent to care for self, or leaves child with persons unwilling or unable to provide adequate care, placing the child at serious or severe harm. *(Lack of supervision)*
2. Child is fearful of parent, guardian or custodian, other family members or other people living in or having access to the home. *(Fear)*
3. The behavior of a child living in the home threatens serious or severe harm to him/ herself or to others and the parent; guardian or custodian cannot control the behavior. *(Out of control child behaviors)*
4. Parent, guardian or custodian is verbally hostile when talking to or about the child and has extremely unrealistic expectations for the child's behavior. *(Verbal abuse, extreme expectations)*
5. Parent, guardian or custodian's behavior is violent, erratic or unpredictable and may cause serious or severe harm to the child. *(Violent/erratic parent behavior)*
6. Domestic violence among adults living in or having access to the home impairs necessary supervision or care of the child and may result in serious or severe harm to the child. *(Domestic violence)*
7. Parent, guardian or custodian has caused serious or severe harm to the child or has made a threat to cause serious or severe harm to the child. *(Physical abuse)*
8. Parent, guardian or custodian's explanation for the child's injury or physical condition is inconsistent with the observed or diagnosed injury or condition. *(Physical abuse)*
9. Parent, guardian or custodian refuses access to the child, or there is reason to believe that the family is about to flee, or the child's whereabouts are unknown. *(Refuses access)*
10. Parent, guardian or custodian has not, cannot or will not protect the child from serious or severe harm, including harm from other persons living in or having access to the home. *(Failure to protect)*
11. Parent, guardian or custodian is unwilling or unable to meet the child's immediate needs for food, clothing, shelter, and/or medical or mental health care and could cause or may result in serious or severe of harm to the child. *(Neglect)*
12. Parent, guardian or custodian or other adult living in or having access to the home previously threatened the safety of a child and/or caused harm to a child and circumstances indicate the person could cause serious or severe harm to the child. *(Previous harm to a child)*
13. Child sexual abuse is suspected and circumstances suggest that continued sexual abuse places the child in immediate serious or severe harm. *(Sexual abuse)*
14. Physical conditions in the home are hazardous and may directly cause serious or severe harm to the child. *(Hazardous living environment)*
15. Drug and/or alcohol use by parent, guardian or custodian or others living in or having access to the home may result in serious or severe harm to the child. *(Substance abuse)*
16. The parent, guardian or custodian's involvement in criminal activity or the criminal activity of any other person living in or having access to the home may result in serious or severe harm to the child. *(Criminal activity)*
17. The physical or mental health or mental limitations of parent, guardian or custodian or other person living in or having access to the home may result in serious or severe harm to the child. *(Mental health)*

Standard Work Requirements:

- The safety discussion guide is to be used during all safety supervisory consultations - investigative and ongoing.
- Documentation of the present danger decision must be entered in the CSRA within two work days of the initial child contact.
- Documentation of each concern and how all of the 5 safety threshold criteria are met or not met must be entered into impending danger in Section 3 letter C of the CSRA or Section 2 letter B CCSRA.

Protective Actions A present danger situation requires an immediate protective action plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the least intrusive way to control present danger while the assessment is completed?• Can the alleged perpetrator leave the home or can the child remain in the home with a safety monitor? Would a voluntary placement agreement be appropriate? Is removal and temporary custody necessary?• If the protective action includes a safety monitor, has the monitor’s capacity, willingness, and availability to protect the child been fully assessed?• When and under what circumstances will the protective action end?
Risk Analysis and Service Provision Discuss the need for services to address risks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is working well in the family? What needs to happen to reduce the worries?• Do the parents have protective capacities that mitigate the risks? In what way?• What is the family’s perception of risks and service needs? Do the parents recognize the risks and are they motivated to change?• Do the risk factors require DCS intervention, or can the risk factors be addressed through community services?• Has there been prior DCS intervention? If so, what has worked or not worked?
Safety Planning A safety plan is required if all 5 safety threshold criteria are met for one or more safety threats. Discuss whether the safety plan for each child is sufficient to control all the identified safety threats and least intrusive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When and under what circumstances is the safety threat present? Are there times when the safety threats are not present?• Can the safety threat be controlled without separating the child(ren) from the parent(s)?• Can the person creating the safety threat leave the home; or can the child and non-abusive parent go together to the home of another person; or can someone come into the home to ensure child safety (safety monitor)?• Does the non-abusive parent have sufficient protective capacities to consistently ensure child safety?• Does the safety plan include a safety monitor and/or safety actions that control and manage impending danger, have an immediate effect, and are immediately accessible and available whenever the safety threats are present?• If applicable, is there evidence that the safety monitor is able to recognize the safety threat, use judgment, and take the specific actions needed to ensure the child's safety?• What makes you feel confident that these safety actions will keep the child safe? Are additional safety actions, or less restrictive safety actions, needed?• Does the safety plan violate any court orders?